DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 471 TM 022 763

AUTHOR	Wilkinson, David
TITLE	To GED or Not To GED: AISD Dropout Recovery Programs, 1993-94.
INSTITUTION	Austin Independent School District, Tex. Office of Research and Evaluation.
REPORT NO	AISD-93.12
PUB DATE	Sep 94
NOTE	58p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Programs; *Cost Effectiveness; Dropout Programs; *Dropouts; Enrollment; General Education; *High School Equivalency Programs; Job Training; Nontraditional Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Public Agencies; School Districts; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Austin Independent School District TX

ABSTRACT

In fall 1993, the Austin (Texas) Independent School District (AISD) contracted with two community-based organizations to serve eligible AISD dropouts during the 1993-94 school year. The American Institute for Learning and Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. provided services through the Creative Rapid Learning Center (CRLC) and the 78702 RAYS program, respectively. The CRLC program served 216 youths and the RAYS program served 59. At best, the dropout recovery program reduced the district's annual dropout rate an estimated 1.3 percentage points. The dropouts served represented about 13% of district dropouts each year. Of the youths served, none earned a high school diploma, and only 24% completed the requirements for the GED. While only 1 student returned to school, 78 remained enrolled. However, 129 (47%) left the program. It is recommended that the district continue to place the greater proportion of its resources into dropout prevention, and dropout recovery in dropout prevention but that the district should continue to contract with community-based agencies to provide dropouts with further education and job training, while encouraging the community agencies to serve many more youths. Eight figures and five attachments present findings and supplemental information. (Contains 14 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. LIGON

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED 380 471

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful for the cooperation and assistance of many people during the conduct of the evaluation.

AIL/CRLC Program Staff

Penny Weibly, Chief Program Officer
Rebecca Benz, Coordinator of Essential Services and MIS
Julian Huerta, Data Analyst

78702 RAYS Program Staff

Willia Bailey, Program Coordinator, 78702 RAYS
Mitch Weynand, Executive Director, Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc.

AISD Administrative Staff

Paul Turner, Area Director, Area 2
Toni Turk, Area Superintendent (formerly), Area 4
Gloria Williams, Area Director, Area 4
James Gandy, Assistant Director, Student Records and Reports
Frank Partée, Assistant Director, Finance

The evaluation was enriched by a working association on the Opportunities for Youth '94 Partnered Audit with the staff from the audit department of the City of Austin, especially Colleen Waring, Senior Auditor, and Steven Morgan, Deputy City Auditor, along with others conducting or assisting the audit.

OFY '94 Audit Dropout Team

Richard Powell, Texas Center for Educational Research (formerly), Dropout Team Leader
Elaine Jackson, AISD Planning Associate
Beth Pyszka, Student Intern

Other Contributors

Cindy Roberts-Gray, Senior Scientist, Resource Network
Robert Brandon, Contracts Coordinator, Private Industry Council, Inc.

TO GED OR NOT TO GED: AISD DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAMS, 1993-94

Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District
Office of Research and Evaluation

Author: David Wilkinson

Program Description

In fall 1993, the Austin Independent School District contracted with two community-based organizations "to serve eligible Austin ISD dropouts" during the 1993-94 school year. Through these contracts, the District hoped to:

- Reduce the AISD dropout rate, and
- Provide another option for serving at-risk students, especially in the high-need 78702 zip code area.

The Board of Trustees approved a contract with the American Institute for Learning (AIL) on August 9, 1993 and with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. on October 11, 1993. The major responsibility of the contractors was to provide appropriate instruction to students "to assure the mastery of essential [illegible]" and/or General Educational Development (GED) instruction by certified teaching staff.

The District agreed to pay each contractor a portion of the State share of the Foundation School Program netted by the average daily attendance (ADA) of AISD students who attended minus a processing fee.

AIL and Middle Earth provided services through the Creative Rapid Learning Center (CRLC) and the 78702 RAYS program, respectively.

Major Findings

1. During the 1993-94 school year, a total of 275 youths, ages 15-20, who had not obtained a high school diploma were served by two dropout recovery programs. The Creative Rapid Learning Center (CRLC) served 216 youths, and 78702 RAYS served 59 youths. (Page 6)

2. At best, the dropout recovery program reduced the District's annual dropout rate for high schools an estimated 1.3 percentage points. The 275 youths served represent about 13% of the number of students who drop out of AISD **each** year (2,166 students in grades 7-12 dropped out in 1992-93). (Pages 12-13)

3. Among the 275 youths served:

   - **None earned a high school diploma;**
   - 67 (24%) completed the requirements for a GED;
   - 1 (0.4%) returned to school;
   - 78 (28%) are still enrolled; and
   - 129 (47%) dropped from the program. (Page 10)

4. Among the 275 youths served:

   - 229 (83%) had last attended an AISD high school;
   - **14 (5%) had never attended school in AISD;**
   - 169 (62%) were Hispanic, 67 (24%) were African American, and 38 (14%) were White;
   - 148 (54%) were female and 127 (46%) were male;
   - 178 (65%) were 9th graders; and
   - 116 (42%) were ages 16 or 17. (Pages 8-9)

5. Based on an average daily attendance of 46.3 students per day, a total of $50,839 was disbursed to AIL and Middle Earth for dropout recovery services. The per-pupil cost was $185. (Pages 14-15)

6. AIL and Middle Earth were disbursed payments for their services according to different formulas. It is unclear why remuneration for AIL and Middle Earth was calculated differently. Steps are being taken to rectify the discrepant payments. (Page 15)

7. Claims by the American Council on Education (ACE), the national sponsoring body, that the GED is equivalent to a high school diploma are disputed in the research literature. However, many benefits deriving from the GED are cited in the literature, including opening employment, schooling, and training opportunities, enhancing a sense of self-worth, and pleasing recipients' families. (Pages 21-23)

8. According to information provided by ACE, the GED Tests are difficult; the GED is not a remedial study program. Only seven out of ten graduating high school seniors would earn passing scores if they took the GED Tests. The GED Tests cover what graduating high school seniors are supposed to know about writing, science, mathematics, social studies, and literature and the arts. (Page 21)

Budget Implications

Mandate: Requested by the Board of Trustees

Funding Amount: $180,000 allocated; $50,839 of State pass-through funds disbursed

Funding Source: Local (State ADA monies)

Implications:

Although concerned with dropouts, the programs strongly address three of AISD's five strategic objectives: 1) "every student will function at his/her optimal level of achievement and will progress successfully through the system"; 2) "one hundred percent of all students who enter AISD will graduate"; and 3) "after exiting AISD, all individuals will be able to perform successfully at their next endeavor." Continued funding will allow the District to provide educational options for students who have dropped out of school and who are unlikely to return to school and complete the requirements to earn a high school diploma.

Recommendations

1. AISD should make every effort to keep students in school through graduation. Where that is not possible, AISD should cooperate with the Austin community to help provide opportunities for youth to further their education and/or get job training.

2. AISD should continue to place the greater proportion of its resources devoted to dropout prevention and dropout recovery in dropout *prevention*. However, the District should not neglect the youth who leave.

3. AISD should continue to contract with community-based agencies whose purpose is to provide dropouts with further education and job training.

4. AISD should encourage the community agencies to serve many more youth than they are currently serving.

5. AISD should share information with community agencies that will enable the agencies to serve their client populations--AISD's former students--better.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

AISD DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAMS, 1993-94

PROGRAM	RATING	COST	NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED	COST PER STUDENT SERVED	NUMBER OF DROPOUTS RECOVERED (EFFECT)* #	%	COST PER DROPOUT RECOVERED (COST/ EFFECT)
Creative Rapid Learning Center (CRLC) (American Institute for Learning) Funding Source: Local Grades: 7-12	+	$31,348	216	$145	116	53.7	$270
78702 RAYS (Middle Earth, Inc.) Funding Source: Local Grades: 9-11	+	$19,491**	59	$330**	30	50.8	$650**

* Number of dropouts recovered is the number of students obtaining a GED, returning to school, or still enrolled in the program.
** Will be lowered to reflect Net State Share instead of total State payment.

Rating is expressed as contributing to any of the five AISD strategic objectives.

- \+ *Positive*, needs to be maintained or expanded
- 0 *Not significant*, needs to be improved and modified
- \- *Negative*, needs major modification or replacement
- Blank *Unknown*

Cost is the expense relative to the regular District per-student expenditure of about $4,000.

- 0 *No cost* or minimal cost
- $ *Indirect costs*, and overhead, but no separate budget
- $$ *Some direct costs*, but under $500 per student
- $$$ *Major direct costs* for teachers, staff, and/or equipment in the range of $500 per student

OPEN LETTER

The subject of dropouts is an emotional one for many people. In our increasingly more complicated society, in which education is seen to play a key role in social and economic advancement, dropouts are a great waste of human potential, apart from the societal burden they are thought to pose. AISD recognition of the dropout problem and efforts to address it have been ongoing for a decade or more. To the large array of programs intended for, or with an arguable relationship to *dropout prevention*, the District contracted with community-based agencies to provide two programs devoted to *dropout recovery*. The distinction is an important one, because it has implications for future policy decisions. In a "Summary of Preliminary Findings" by the Opportunities for Youth III Audit Dropout Team, which is studying AISD's and the Austin community's dropout recovery efforts, the first conclusion is that "AISD program and service efforts for dropout prevention and recovery are heavily weighted towards *prevention*" (emphasis added).

If dropout prevention is described as any effort aimed at keeping students in school through high school graduation, dropout recovery aims to do what? One view of dropout recovery is of efforts geared toward bringing young people back from the margins of society and reengaging them in the pursuit of a high school diploma--off of the streets and back into the classroom. By contracting with two community-based organizations, District decision makers hoped to ameliorate the dropout problem. Some decision makers envisioned the programs assisting dropouts to return to school. The reality turns out to be that most of the former students who are the clients of these organizations are headed in the direction of obtaining a GED. Dropout recovery, at least as practiced by the two contractors, does not result in students resuming a course toward a high school diploma.

The issue turns, then, on whether the GED is an acceptable outcome. Although the research literature is mixed on this point, it is generally acknowledged that the GED is not equivalent to a high school diploma. It is also frequently asserted, with some research support, that a GED is better than nothing. In resolving the discrepancy between their hopes and expectations for dropout recovery and the performance of the contractors (per the actual terms of their contracts), District decision makers should reflect on the nature of school and dropouts. The fact is that our educational system, by and large, proceeds in a lock-step fashion, and there are many opportunities along the way for students to get out of step with the system. The students who get sufficiently out of step--overage compared to their peers and with few course credits earned--are the most likely to drop out, and the likelihood that they will return to school is not very good. For these youth, the more options to further their education and improve their opportunities for the future the better.

The District must continue its current emphasis on dropout prevention. Having every student get a high school diploma is our first and best goal. At the same time, the District should not abandon its former students, and contracting with community-based agencies for services for dropouts is a step toward providing options for youth who might not otherwise have them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY ii

OPEN LETTER iii

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 1

INTRODUCTION 2

- Background 2
- Evaluation Overview 4
- Program Description 5

FINDINGS 6

- Students Served 6
- Student Characteristics 7
- Student Outcomes 10
- Impact On AISD's Dropout Rate 12

COSTS 14

DISCUSSION 16

- Issues 16
- Review of the Literature 19
- Directions for Future Inquiry 24

BIBLIOGRAPHY 25

LIST OF FIGURES AND ATTACHMENTS 26

ATTACHMENTS 27

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

- AISD has taken an additional step toward addressing the needs of its students who have dropped out of school.
- A small number of AISD's nearly 2,000 dropouts per year have entered a dropout recovery program and have received or are on track towards receiving a GED. However, only one student returned to school, and no students have completed the requirements for a high school diploma.
- The contractors successfully discharged the terms of their contracts. They served the numbers of youth projected, and they enabled an acceptable percentage to obtain GED's, but the programs did not materially affect AISD's dropout rate.
- The GED is not equivalent to a high school diploma. Earning a high school diploma is the preferred outcome for any AISD student. However, many benefits derive from the GED, and for those youth for whom a regular high school program is not a realistic possibility, the GED is a well established alternative.
- The GED is not an easily obtained credential and should not be thought of a "shortcut" to graduation by students who do not wish to complete a regular high school program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- AISD should make every effort to keep students in school through graduation. Where that is not possible, AISD should cooperate with the Austin community to help provide opportunities for youth to further their education and/or get job training.
- AISD should continue to contract with community-based agencies whose purpose is to provide dropouts with further education and job training. The District should require that these agencies serve youth who, because of being overage with few academic credits, are not likely to reenroll in a regular high school program.
- AISD should continue to place the greater proportion of its resources devoted to dropout prevention and dropout recovery in dropout prevention. However, the District should not neglect the youth who leave.
- AISD should draw up interagency agreements which will permit the District to share with community agencies information that will assist the agencies in serving their client populations--AISD's former students--better.
- AISD should encourage the community agencies to serve many more youth than they are currently serving.

TO GED OR NOT TO GED: AISD DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAMS, 1993-94

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In fall 1993, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) contracted with two community-based organizations "to serve eligible Austin ISD dropouts" during the 1993-94 school year. Through these contracts, the District hoped to:

1. Reduce the AISD dropout rate, and
2. Provide another option for serving at-risk students, especially in the high-need 78702 zip code area.

The Board of Trustees approved a contract with the American Institute for Learning (AIL) on August 9, 1993 and with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. on October 11, 1993. The full text of the agenda items presented to the Board of Trustees and the contracts with AIL and Middle Earth are contained in Attachments 1 and 2, respectively.

The wording of the two contracts was very similar. Both contracts were for the 1993-94 school year, "renewable at the parties' option." Each contract set out the respective responsibilities of the community-based organization and AISD. Notably, among other responsibilities, contractors were each required to:

- Verify the eligibility (based on age, residence, and dropout status) of the students to be served;
- Provide appropriate instruction to students "to assure the mastery of essential elements" and/or General Educational Development (GED) instruction by certified teaching staff;
- Provide Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) tutorial support; and,
- Keep records of student enrollment/attendance and progress.

The contract with Middle Earth stipulated, in addition, that Middle Earth would serve "only those students who...are considered dropouts under our District's dropout identification criteria." The AIL and Middle Earth contracts differed slightly as regards the GED. Middle Earth's contract called for it to "provide GED instruction, including pretesting and posttesting at a GED accredited testing center," while AIL was to assure completion of "the requirement for a GED, including instruction, pre-test and post-test at a GED accredited testing center."

For its part, among other responsibilities, AISD was to:

- Provide textbooks "according to state code";
- Award a diploma (paid for by the contractor) from the Evening High School to a student successfully completing the requirements for high school graduation, and allow that student to participate in graduation ceremonies at the Evening High School;

- Designate personnel to monitor the terms of the contract; and
- Pay the contractor a portion of the State share of the Foundation School Program netted by the average daily attendance (ADA) of AISD students who attended, minus a processing fee.

In addition, AISD agreed to provide transportation to eligible students to the alternative education program and to the site where students would participate in state-required testing. The cost for providing transportation for 200 students utilizing Capital Metro bus passes was estimated at $6,000 ($5.00 per student per month for six months).

See Attachments 1 and 2 for additional contractual details regarding payments to the contractors. Payments to the contractors will be discussed in more detail in the "Costs" section of this report.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

As indicated in the contracts, AISD's Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) was charged with conducting an evaluation of the dropout recovery programs conducted during the 1993-94 school year by the American Institute of Learning (AIL) through its Creative Rapid Learning Center (CRLC) division and by Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. under the program name 78702 RAYS.

The evaluation plans for these two programs are published in *The Research and Evaluation Agenda for AISD--1993-94* (ORE Publication No. 93.07).

As described on page 12 of the *Agenda*, ORE evaluation plans are structured around decision questions to be answered by the decision makers who are the major audience or reference group for the evaluation; decision questions are not answered by evaluation staff. ORE evaluations seek to answer evaluation questions associated with, and constituent to, the decision questions to provide decision makers with the information they need to answer the decision questions. The answer to a decision question is a program or District decision.

The two decision questions addressed by the evaluation were:

> Should the District continue to contract with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. and/or other community-based organizations for alternative education programs for District dropouts?
>
> Should the District continue to contract with American Institute for Learning (AIL) and/or other community-based organizations for alternative education programs for District dropouts?

Data for the evaluation were obtained from the following sources.

- Information about program services and outcomes was provided by program staff from program records.
- Computer files maintained on the District's mainframe computer were accessed for data about students' enrollment, attendance, and withdrawal reasons.
- ORE's GENeric Evaluation SYStem (GENESYS) provided demographic, progress, and achievement information about program students.
- Staff in the Department of Finance provided cost information.
- The General Educational Development (GED) Unit of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) furnished general background information about the GED from the American Council on Education (ACE).
- A review of the literature provided additional information about GED's.

Note: In this report, both the names of the contractors and the programs are used, as appropriate. The contractors were AIL and Middle Earth; their programs were CRLC and 78702 RAYS, respectively.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

American Institute for Learning (AIL) Dropout Recovery Program

The American Institute for Learning (AIL) has provided alternative education, employment training, and support services to dropout youth in Austin for the last 14 years. The mission of AIL is "to empower individuals to become productive, self-sufficient citizens through a holistic approach to education that incorporates innovative learning methodologies, personal development, and economic opportunities."

AIL's programs are designed for teenagers (and adults) who have not succeeded in the traditional school environment. Instruction is open entry/open exit, individualized, and self-paced, with both computer-assisted and cooperative learning materials. Counseling, support services (e.g., child care and health screening), and personal development classes are in place to help teenagers address barriers to their academic success. Over the years, AIL reports, hundreds of youth have improved their academic skills, earned their GED's, been assisted in finding jobs, and/or have gone on to higher education at Austin Community College.

In August 1993, AIL became an official dropout recovery program for AISD. AIL's Creative Rapid Learning Center (CRLC) provided a program projected to serve an estimated 200 AISD dropouts. CRLC has three blocks of instructional time varying from three to five hours--8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. Classes on a wide variety of topics, from reading enrichment to environmental science, are offered. Job readiness training is provided to all students. The teacher-to-student ratio is in the range of 1 to 15. Students average four hours of class a day, five days a week. CRLC is exploring options for students to earn course credits toward high school graduation. Currently, most CRLC students work to improve their basic skills with a view toward obtaining a GED. The most academically able students are encouraged to return to school.

78702 RAYS Dropout Recovery Program

Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc., along with AISD, the City of Austin, Communities in Schools, Austin Community College, Austin/Travis County Youth Services, Inc., Southwest Correctional Arts Network (SCAN), Texas Youth Commission (TYC), and the Central East Austin Community Organization (CEACO), is a partner in the *Reaching All Youth Services (RAYS)* Collaboration. The RAYS Collaboration targets children and youth aged 0-16 and up to 21 for General Educational Development (GED) services. The geographic target area is east Austin with priority given to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) students and their families, as well as children, youth, and families residing in zip code geographical area 78702 and peripheral communities, and youth and families from the greater Austin community as appropriate. Reportedly, 80% of the residents in the 78702 zip code area who are older than 25 years of age have neither a high school diploma nor a GED.

78702 RAYS is a community-based youth services program designed to reduce risks and increase opportunities for children and youth and their families in the 78702 zip code area. The purpose of the program is to provide an alternative for dropout recovery with the 78702 zip code geographical area as the primary target area. Implemented through the collaborative effort of youth and family services agencies, AISD, local government, and the people who live and work in the 78702 zip code area, the program was initiated in September 1992 with grant funds from the City of Austin. The service approach is based on the philosophy that family involvement, self-help, and neighbors-helping-neighbors are keys to success in developing healthier, safer, more prosperous futures in every community in Austin and in the U.S.

The 78702 RAYS program has been housed in two portable classrooms on the ALC campus. In contracting with AISD, Middle Earth sought to expand its services by offering a program during the 1993-94 school year featuring both GED preparation and a competency-based curriculum leading to a high school diploma. The program was structured as an evening program, operating on the ALC campus in an additional two portables, and serving up to 50 students.

FINDINGS

STUDENTS SERVED

Eligibility for Service

Both contracts designate "eligible Austin ISD dropouts" as the group to be served, which implied that only students who had previously been AISD students and who had dropped out from AISD could be served. The contract with Middle Earth stipulated, in fact, that Middle Earth would serve "only those students who are considered dropouts under our District's dropout identification criteria." Accordingly, to help identify students for service, in November 1993, ORE provided 78702 RAYS staff with a list of 1992-93 dropouts who were residing in zip code areas 78702, 78722, and 78723. ORE provided CRLC staff with six-weeks lists of students who had dropped out during the second, third, and fourth six weeks of 1993-94 according to dropout files maintained by ORE.

In April 1994, verification of information received from the CRLC identified some students who had not been previously enrolled in AISD. Because these students had not been in AISD before, they could not have dropped out from AISD, and therefore were not eligible to be served, if this interpretation of the contracts were correct. This finding prompted two questions for District administrators:

- Should these students be counted as served by the program?
- Should the District pay the portion of students' ADA called for by the contract?

On deliberation, a different point of view was expressed by the program staff and District administrators who were concerned that a too-strict interpretation of this provision would prevent some young people who might benefit from the programs from being served. They argued that the programs should serve those young people who would otherwise be served by the District if they chose to enroll. As administrators pointed out, students could quickly qualify to be served by one of the dropout recovery programs if they became classified as AISD dropouts by enrolling in an AISD school and then dropping out. Further, administrators noted, service to these students did not cost the District anything because State ADA monies "flow through" AISD. Rather than obliging students to seek this loophole, it was agreed that school age youth who were residing within AISD's boundaries could be served.

Number of Students Served

During the 1993-94 school year, CRLC and 78702 RAYS served a total of 275 students. From August 30, 1993 through May 31, 1994, CRLC served 216 students; during the spring 1994 semester, 78702 RAYS served 59 students. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY CRLC AND 78702 RAYS, 1993-94

PROGRAM	Fall 1993	Spring 1994	TOTAL
CRLC	128	88	216
78702 RAYS	0	59	59
TOTAL	128	147	275

Note: Semester of service is according to entry date; some students were enrolled both semesters.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

AISD Schools Previously Attended

The 275 students served by 78702 RAYS and CRLC had previously been in attendance at one or another of all of AISD's high schools and most AISD middle/junior high schools (see Figure 2). One third of the 78702 RAYS students had last attended Austin or Johnston; 14% were previously Travis students; another 20% had last been Alternative Learning Center (ALC) or Reagan students. Two 78702 RAYS students (3%) had last attended a middle/junior high school in AISD.

Almost one half (47%) of the CRLC students served had last attended Travis, Johnston, Robbins, or Austin High Schools; 8% of the students had last attended middle/junior high schools; one student's last school of record in AISD was an elementary school.

Three of 59 students (5%) served by 78702 RAYS and 11 of 216 students (5%) served by CRLC had never previously attended an AISD school.

Student Demographics

During the 1993-94 school year, 78702 RAYS served 59 students, almost all of whom were minority students, and most of whom were ninth graders. Of the 216 students served by CRLC, most were minority students, and about two out of three were ninth graders. Roughly equal percentages of the students served by both programs were male and female. Figure 3 presents demographic information on the 78702 RAYS and CRLC program students.

FIGURE 2
AISD SCHOOLS LAST ATTENDED BY STUDENTS SERVED BY 78702 RAYS AND CRLC, 1993-94

SCHOOL	78702 RAYS		CRLC		TOTAL	
	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Anderson HS	0	0.0	9	4.2	9	3.3
Austin HS	10	16.9	22	10.2	32	11.6
Bowie HS	1	1.7	9	4.2	10	3.6
Crockett HS	0	0.0	19	8.8	19	6.9
Evening HS	3	5.1	3	1.4	6	2.2
LBJ HS	1	1.7	7	3.2	8	2.9
Johnston HS	10	16.9	26	12.0	36	13.1
Lanier HS	2	3.4	16	7.4	18	6.5
McCallum HS	2	3.4	4	1.9	6	2.2
Reagan HS	6	10.2	13	6.0	19	6.9
Robbins HS	4	6.8	26	12.0	30	10.9
Travis HS	8	13.6	28	13.0	36	13.1
Covington MS	1	1.7	1	0.5	2	0.7
Dobie MS	0	0.0	2	0.9	2	0.7
Fulmore MS	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Kealing JHS	1	1.7	3	1.4	4	1.5
Martin JHS	0	0.0	2	0.9	2	0.7
Mendez MS	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Murchison MS	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Pearce MS	0	0.0	2	0.9	2	0.7
Porter MS	0	0.0	4	1.9	4	1.5
Webb MS	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Odom EL	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Alternative Learning Center (ALC)	6	10.2	3	1.4	9	3.3
Homebound	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Teenage Parent Program	1	1.7	0	0.0	1	0.4
Never Attended AISD	3	5.1	11	5.1	14	5.1
TOTAL	59	100.0	216	100.0	275	100.0

FIGURE 3
GRADE LEVEL, SEX, ETHNICITY, AND AGE OF THE STUDENTS SERVED BY 78702 RAYS AND CRLC, 1993-94

	PROGRAM				TOTAL	
	78702 RAYS		CRLC			
GRADE	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
7	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
8	0	0.0	19	8.8	19	6.9
9	41	69.5	137	63.4	178	64.7
10	10	16.9	40	18.5	50	18.2
11	8	13.6	14	6.5	22	8.0
12	0	0.0	5	2.3	5	1.8
SEX						
Male	27	45.8	100	46.3	127	46.2
Female	32	54.2	116	53.7	148	53.8
ETHNICITY						
African American	18	30.5	49	22.7	67	24.4
Asian	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Hispanic	39	66.1	130	60.2	169	61.5
White	2	3.4	36	16.7	38	13.8
AGE						
15	6	10.2	19	8.8	25	9.1
16	21	35.6	75	34.7	96	34.9
17	14	23.7	57	26.4	71	25.8
18	12	20.3	33	15.3	45	16.4
19	1	1.7	19	8.8	20	7.3
20	5	8.5	13	6.0	18	6.5
TOTAL	59	100.0	216	100.0	275	100.0

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Credentials Earned

As shown in Figure 4, only one of the 275 students served by CRLC and 78702 RAYS returned to school, and **none of the students served by the two dropout recovery programs earned a high school diploma.** However, 59 CRLC students (29%) and 8 78702 RAYS students (14%) obtained a GED. Altogether, **67 (24%) of the students served by the two dropout recovery programs obtained a GED.**

Of the 216 students served by CRLC, 56 (26%) are still enrolled in the program, and 100 (66%) dropped from the program. Among the 59 78702 RAYS students served, 22 (37%) are still enrolled in the program, while 29 (49%) dropped from the program.

FIGURE 4
PROGRAM OUTCOMES, CRLC AND 78702 RAYS, 1993-94

Program	Diploma	GED	Returned to School	Still Enrolled in Program	Dropped From the Program	Total
CRLC	0 (0.0%)	59 (29.3%)	1 (0.5%)	56 (25.9%)	100 (46.3%)	216 (100.0%)
78702 RAYS	0 (0.0%)	8 (13.6%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (37.3%)	29 (49.2%)	59 (100.0%)
TOTAL	0 (0.0%)	67 (24.4%)	1 (0.4%)	78 (28.4%)	129 (46.9%)	275 (100.0%)

Attendance

The contracts specified that the programs would keep student attendance records "in accordance with instructions in the Daily Register of Pupil Attendance." Figure 5 shows student attendance for each program for the fall 1993 and spring 1994 semesters and for the entire year. Student attendance was well below the District average for high schools (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5
STUDENT ATTENDANCE, CRLC AND 78702 RAYS, 1993-94

PROGRAM	Fall 1993		Spring 1994		Entire Year	
	ADA	%	ADA	%	ADA	%
AIL (High School)	37	61.5%	35	70.5%	38	59.2%
78702 RAYS	-	-	7	26.8%	8	37.9%
ALL HIGH SCHOOLS	14,677	84.9%	13,219	88.8%	14,078	89.2%

- = Did not serve any students
ADA = Average Daily Attendance

Achievement

The contracts specified that the contractors should "assist Austin ISD in administering the student assessment program" as required by State law. Few students, however, seem to have been tested. Of the 59 students served by 78702 RAYS, one eleventh grader took the Norm-referenced Achievement Program for Texas (NAPT) administered in spring 1994. Twelve students--four ninth graders, three tenth graders, and five eleventh graders--took the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Percent mastery on the TAAS for these 12 students was 58%, 67%, and 42% for the Writing, Reading, and Mathematics tests, respectively.

There is no record of the 216 students served by the CRLC having participated in achievement testing. According to CRLC, AISD informed CRLC that GED-track students were not required to take the TAAS.

Course Credits

Students served by the two dropout recovery programs did not earn any course credits transferable to a regular high school program. CRLC staff are exploring the possibility of modifying the CRLC curriculum so that transferable course credits could be earned by its students.

Grades

Grades such as those used by regular high schools were not awarded to students served by the dropout recovery programs.

IMPACT ON AISD'S DROPOUT RATE

A comparison of the annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 for 1992-93, the year before the programs, with the comparable rate for 1993-94, the year of program implementation, would provide the best indicator of the impact of the programs on AISD's dropout rate. However, the annual dropout rate for 1993-94 cannot be calculated yet. The annual rate includes all of the students who drop out during a 12-month period, including the summer after the school year. Because the annual rate includes summer dropouts, and because students cannot be counted as dropouts until they have been out of school for 30 school days, the annual rate cannot be calculated until 30 days after the start of school, approximately the third week in September at the earliest. Traditionally, with first day of school coming later than it did at the start of the 1994-95 school year, the annual rate is calculated as of October 1. Therefore, in a strict sense, **the impact of the dropout recovery programs on the District's dropout rate cannot be determined until the annual rate for 1993-94 is calculated.**

An estimate of the impact on AISD's dropout rate may be approximated, however, by adjusting the 1992-93 annual rate by the number of dropouts considered recovered by the program. (For the purposes of this estimate, all of the students will be assumed to have been 1992-93 dropouts, that is, as having dropped out in 1992-93, before the 1993-94 school year and the start of the programs. In fact, only 48 of the students served (17.5%) were identified as dropouts on the 1992-93 dropout file.) Because dropout rates are calculated separately for grades 7-8 and grades 9-12, and because 20 middle school students were served by the dropout recovery programs, separate estimates will be made for high school and junior high school.

A total of 275 students were served by the dropout recovery programs. However, as previously discussed, 14 of the students served (5%) were never AISD students and were, therefore, not dropouts from AISD, even if they were dropouts from other school districts. Hence, service to these students had no impact on AISD's dropout rate.

Of the remaining 241 high school students served (deducting the 20 middle school students), assuming that all of the other students were AISD dropouts, and assuming that all of the students served, even those who dropped from the programs, were recovered, the estimated impact is calculated by subtracting the number of dropouts recovered from the number of 1992-93 dropouts and dividing by the 1992-93 enrollment to obtain the percentage (see below).

> Number of 1992-93 dropouts in grades 9-12, 1,778, less 241 equals 1,537, divided by the 1992-93 enrollment in grades 9-12, 18,111, equals 8.5%.

The published annual dropout rate for AISD high schools for 1992-93 was 9.8%. *The estimated effect of the dropout recovery programs is a decrease in the 1992-93 annual dropout rate for high schools by 1.3 percentage points*, a small decrease.

Using the same method for grades 7-8, the estimated effect on the 1992-93 annual dropout rate for grades 7-8 is calculated below.

> Number of 1992-93 dropouts in grades 7-8, 388, less 20 equals 368, divided by the 1992-93 enrollment in grades 7-8, 10,539, equals 3.5%.

The published annual dropout rate for grades 7-8 for 1992-93 was 3.7%. *The estimated effect of the dropout recovery programs is a decrease in the 1992-93 annual dropout rate for grades 7-8 by .2 percentage points*, a slight decrease.

In general, even making assumptions most favorable to the programs, it appears that the effect of the dropout recovery programs on AISD's dropout rate was minor at best. This finding is not surprising given the small number of students served relative to the approximately 2,000 of students in grades 7-12 who drop out from AISD each year. In 1992-93, 2,166 students dropped out. Even if all 275 of the students served were counted as recovered dropouts, including the students who could not have been AISD dropouts, they represent 13% of the dropouts.

COSTS

The Austin Independent School District allocated $180,000 during the 1993-94 school year for dropout recovery. By contract, the District agreed to pay to the American Institute for Learning (AIL) and Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. each semester that portion of the State share of the Foundation School Program that is netted by the average daily attendance (ADA) of AISD students who attended under the contract minus the AISD processing fee, which is equal to the indirect cost rate established by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for those funds--2.303% for 1993-94. The Net State Share is defined as the total State payment of ADA-based funds to AISD less the local fund assignment of AISD and all other deductions from State funds received by the District, so that the total amount paid to each contractor was not to exceed the net amount of State funds received by the District reduced by the processing fee. The actual amount to be received by AISD, after local fund assignment and other deductions, is approximately $900 per student in ADA.

Each contract specified that the contractor was to receive a payment of 33% of the estimated funds due for the year at the end of the first and second semesters. This estimate was to be based on the ADA generated by the end of each semester. A final payment of the balance due was to be made at the end of the summer.

A total of $50,839 was disbursed to AIL and Middle Earth for dropout recovery services rendered under contract. Each organization received, per student, that portion of money from the State which AISD would have received had those students stayed in school (less the AISD processing fee of 2.303%). A summary of the monies paid to each organization is shown in Figures 6 and 7.

FIGURE 6
MIDDLE EARTH DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAM, STUDENTS SERVED AND MONIES DISBURSED, 1993-94

PROGRAM	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA) REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT PAID BY TEA	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA)*	LESS INDIRECT COSTS NOT REIMBURSED BY TEA	TOTAL MONIES GIVEN TO PROGRAM
Middle Earth/ 78702 RAYS	$2,463 Per Student	8.1 Students	$459.46	$19,491

* Average daily attendance (ADA) is calculated by dividing the sum of the days students attended the program by the number of students in the program.

FIGURE 7
AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAM, STUDENTS SERVED AND MONIES DISBURSED, 1993-94

PROGRAM	NUMBER OF DAYS TAUGHT x ADA	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA) REIMBURSEMENT	LESS INDIRECT COSTS NOT REIMBURSED BY TEA	TOTAL MONIES GIVEN TO PROGRAM
American Institute for Learning (AIL)/Creative Rapid Learning Center	6,535	$4.91 Per Day	$739	$31,348

Middle Earth received $19,491 for serving an average of 8.1 students. Middle Earth was paid $2,463 times the total average daily attendance (ADA) of 8.1 students (less the AISD processing fee of 2.303%). The TEA reimbursement rate of $2,463 per student is the standard amount TEA allocates for each student in the State. This $2,463 was "passed through" AISD to Middle Earth because the organization was delivering services to AISD dropouts.

AIL received $31,348 for serving an average of 38.2 students. AIL's payment was calculated on a daily rate instead of on the basis of $2,463 per student. For each semester, AIL calculated the number of days taught times the ADA and multiplied that result by the $4.91 daily rate paid by AISD (less the AISD processing fee of 2.303%).

It is unclear why the remuneration for AIL and Middle Earth was calculated differently.

As this report goes to press, steps are being taken to rectify the discrepant payments. The amount paid to 78702 RAYS is being modified downward to reflect the Net State Share instead of the total State payment.

DISCUSSION

ISSUES

Sho District Renew the Contracts?

Th question for the evaluation of each dropout recovery program, expressed as a decision question (see "Evaluation Overview") was whether the District should continue to contract with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc., the American Institute for Learning, or other community-based organizations for alternative education programs for District dropouts.

To address this question, evaluation information has been presented about the number of students served, their characteristics, program costs, and program outcomes. However, the answer to the question does not rely on an examination of these statistics, but rather on a value judgment about the success of the programs, which lies in the province of District decision makers and outside the bounds of the evaluation proper. The discussion which follows, however, may help to illuminate the underlying issues and to inform the decision.

How Successful Were the Programs?

The answer to the question, "How successful were the programs?" depends on the criteria used to define success. *If, on the one hand, success is defined in terms of the contractors discharging their responsibilities under the contract, then they were reasonably successful. If, on the other hand, success is defined in the larger sense of ameliorating the problem which gave rise to the contracts in the first place, then the programs were not particularly successful.* The difference between these two assessments lies partly in the distinction between the hopes and expectations associated with the letting of the contracts and the actual terms of the contracts and partly on a judgment of the desirability of certain educational outcomes, in particular, the value of obtaining a GED.

In defining what constitutes success, several important issues need to be considered:

- What was the original intent of the contracts; i.e., what hopes and expectations were associated with the letting of the contracts?
- What did the contracts specify; i.e., what were the contractors supposed to accomplish?
- Is a student's obtaining a GED a good outcome?

Aspects of each of these issues will be discussed further.

Original Intent of the Contracts

Clearly, the intent of the contracts was that the programs would recover dropouts and thereby reduce the District's dropout rate. How many dropouts did the programs recover, then, and did AISD's dropout rate decrease? To answer these questions, some definitions are required. First, what is a dropout, and, second, what does dropout recovery mean? These precise questions arose as part of a study being conducted as part of the City of Austin's Opportunities for Youth '94 initiative. The study, a "partnered audit" involving 14 partners including AISD, is concerned with three critical social policy areas for youth, one of which is dropouts. The dropout team, which includes AISD staff from ORE and Planning and Development, is addressing the issue of dropout recovery. To guide its inquiry, the team formulated the following definitions.

A *dropout* is defined as any youth between the ages of 13-21 who does not have a high school diploma or equivalent, who has been absent from the public school in which the youth was previously enrolled for 30 or more consecutive days, and who has not been reported as enrolled at another public, private, or parochial school. (TEC 11.205)

A *dropout recovery program* is defined as any program whose primary mission is the provision of academic remediation or acceleration services to dropouts, the successful completion of which will result in a high school diploma, competency-based diploma, GED, adequate preparation for GED testing, academic credit transferable back to a school district, and/or re-entry into a school system.

Community-based programs whose primary mission is the provision of a social service or some other service, but which may also direct clients toward re-entry into a school system or to an academically oriented community-based program will be noted as "dropout recovery support services" for the purpose of this study.

The definition of dropout is very similar to that employed by AISD, which follows.

A student is reported as a *dropout* if the individual is absent for a period of 30 or more consecutive school days without approved excuse or documented transfer, or fails to re-enroll by the end of the first six weeks of the following school year, without completion of a high school program.

The critical element common to both definitions is the time frame, which is based on State law. A student becomes a dropout after being out of school for 30 days. While many different interventions might be tried to induce an absent student to return to school, after being out for 30 school days the student is counted as a dropout, regardless of whether the student eventually returns to school. Indeed, having 30 days as the cutoff results in some students, who drop out and then return to school, being counted as dropouts multiple times.

In any event, the important point is that "dropout" is a somewhat fluid status. From the standpoint of official definition and counting, at least, a student can become a dropout fairly easily and can cease being a dropout simply by reentering school.

What is Dropout Recovery?

What then is a dropout recovery program to accomplish? The definition supplied above gives explicit weight to *academic* services, as contrasted with social services, and takes as programmatic success a range of student outcomes. The Department of Labor, in gauging the effectiveness of programs funded under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), employs somewhat different terminology. According to the private Industry Council, Inc. of Travis County, a *positive termination* from a JTPA-funded program occurs when one of the following takes place:

1. *Job placement*--includes entry into the Armed Forces, employment in a registered apprenticeship program, and self-employment;

2. *Completed major level of education*--high school diploma or GED;

3. *Attained youth* employment competencies:
   - Demonstrated proficiency,
   - Pre-employment work maturity--11 areas defined by the Department of Labor,
   - Basic education--locally defined, e.g., by scores on the Tests of Adult Basic Experience (TABE), and
   - Job specific skills;

4. *Remained in school*; and

5. *Returned to school.*

Source: Texas Department of Commerce, Work Force Development Division manual

From these different definitions, it follows that a recovered dropout is one who successfully completes a dropout recovery program, successful completion being defined in terms of one of several outcomes, only one of which is to return to school. **If the intent of the contracts was that the dropout recovery programs would function to return students to school and put them back on the path of earning a high school diploma, clearly, that did not happen. However, if other outcomes, such as preparing for or obtaining a GED, are regarded as acceptable, then the dropout recovery programs fulfilled their contracts.** *Although the contracts speak to "mastering essential elements" and to the District's awarding a diploma "upon successful completion of high school graduation requirements," they do not state that the programs' exclusive purpose is to assist students to return to school or to earn a high school diploma.* In fact, the contracts specify GED instruction as one of the contracted services.

Is a GED a Good Outcome?

The question then becomes, "If students were not returned to school, is earning a GED an acceptable outcome?" To address this question, a review of the literature was conducted. Of particular interest in the search were studies which concerned the relative merits of a GED and a high school diploma, especially as related to the recipient's future earning potential, the benefits which derive from obtaining a GED, and general information about the GED testing program.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What is a GED?

According to information provided by the American Council on Education, the General Educational Development (GED) Tests provide people who did not finish high school the opportunity to earn a *high school equivalency diploma*. The GED program is jointly sponsored by the American Council on Education and state (U.S.), provincial, and territorial (Canadian) departments of education. The GED Tests are administered at 3,400 sites in the United States, its territories, 10 Canadian provinces and territories, and overseas. In Texas, the General Education Development (GED) Unit of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) oversees the state testing program. The GED Unit provides staff development and technical assistance to 200 GED testing centers located throughout the State, issues *Texas certificates of high school equivalency* to qualified candidates, maintains records of certificates issued, and issues duplicate certificates.

TEA "Requirements for a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency" are presented in Attachment 3. To be issued a certificate of high school equivalency, the GED candidate must obtain a standard score of 40 on each of the five tests or an average score of 45 on all five tests. Subchapter E of the Texas Education Code dealing with "General Educational Development" is given in Attachment 4.

TEA is the only agency in Texas authorized to issue a certificate of high school equivalency on the basis of the General Educational Development tests. Tests must be administered by authorized testing centers in accordance with applicable state law and rules of the American Council on Education and the State Board of Education. There are two authorized testing centers in Austin, one at the Austin Community College (ACC) and one at The University of Texas at Austin.

Getting the GED Diploma involves taking a series of *five tests* that are designed to measure the lasting outcome of a high school education. Though someone may not have finished high school, the individual has probably gained knowledge and skills through experience, reading, and informal training. The GED Tests are designed to measure the important knowledge and skills, usually learned during four years of high school, that may have been obtained in a different manner. The questions in each of the tests require general knowledge and thinking skills. Few questions ask about facts, details, or definitions.

The tests measure:

- Writing Skills,
- Social Studies,
- Science,
- Literature and the Arts, and
- Mathematics.

New and revised tests were introduced in 1988, and the battery now includes an essay component designed to evaluate the ability to organize a written answer on a topic of general interest.

All of the questions on the GED Tests are multiple choice with five answer choices given, except for one part of the writing test which requires a written essay. The questions range in difficulty from easy to hard, and cover a wide range of subjects.

The contents of the tests, with the standard time limits given, are shown in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8
CONTENTS OF THE GED TESTS

GED TEST	CONTENTS	NUMBER OF ITEMS	STANDARD TIME LIMITS*
Writing Skills - Part I	35% Sentence Structure 35% Usage 30% Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization	55	75 minutes
Writing Skills - Part II		Essay	45 minutes
Social Studies	25% History 20% Economics 20% Political Science 15% Geography 20% Behavioral Sciences	64	85 minutes
Science	50% Life Science 50% Physical Sciences	66	95 minutes
Interpreting Literature and the Arts	50% Popular Literature 25% Classical Literature 25% Commentary on Literature and the Arts	45	65 minutes
Mathematics	50% Arithmetic 30% Algebra 20% Geometry	56	90 minutes

* In some cases, time limits may be extended.

SOURCE: American Council on Education brochures, November 1989, September 1992

Who is Eligible to Take the GED Tests?

Individuals not currently enrolled in, and not graduated from, high school, and who are at least 17 years of age are eligible to take the GED Tests.

Adult education programs sponsored by local school districts, colleges, and community organizations programs help in GED study. Libraries and bookstores have GED study books. There is also a television series carried by cable television and public television stations. About 20% of all GED test-takers do not formally prepare at all for the tests.

Special editions of the GED Tests designed for people who are visually impaired are available in Braille, audio cassette, and large-print formats. Certain accommodations in the testing conditions are allowed. In addition to the special editions of the test, some people may receive additional time, may use adaptive devices, or have someone record answers for them. Testing could be conducted in a hospital, rehabilitation facility, or institution, with extra rest periods provided. The GED Tests are not yet available on computer.

How Easy is it to Obtain a GED?

According to information provided by the American Council on Education ("ABCs of the GED"):

- The GED Tests are tough. The GED is not a remedial study program.
- Only seven out of ten graduating high school seniors would earn passing scores if they took the GED Tests.
- The GED Tests cover what graduating high school seniors are supposed to know about writing, science, mathematics, social studies, and literature and the arts. They also measure reading comprehension, analytical ability, writing ability, and other important skills.
- The GED Tests last a total of 7 1/2 hours.
- Most people prepare for the GED Tests--with review classes, books, or practice tests. Many already have the knowledge and skills they need. Passing the GED Tests lets them prove it.
- People who pass the GED Tests have stronger reading skills on average than graduating high school seniors.
- About one out of every seven people who receive high school diplomas each year earns that diploma by passing the GED Tests.
- About two out of three persons taking the GED Tests plan to enter a two-year college, four-year college, or trade, technical, or business school during the next year. Another one in eight GED test-takers plans to take on-the-job training during the next year.
- About two thirds of the people taking the GED Tests finished the 10th grade before leaving high school. About one third finished the 11th grade.
- Only one in 20 GED test-takers say academic problems led them to leave school.
- More than half of those who take and pass the GED Test are 24 or younger. Nearly one third are under age 20.
- More than 95 percent of employers nationwide employ GED graduates on the same basis as high school graduates in terms of hiring, salary, and opportunity for advancement.
- Since 1942, more than 12 million adults have earned GED Diplomas.

What Benefits Derive from Obtaining a GED?

Beusse (1972) analyzed the benefits which accrue to servicemen who participate in and pass the GED equivalency tests. *Achievement of GED equivalency was found to result in tangible benefits for the individual, both while in the service and in civilian life.* GED recipients attained higher pay grades than those who did not receive equivalency certification. In civilian life, GED recipients were more likely to be employed in higher paying, more prestigious occupations. Also, GED holders had higher mean weekly earnings than non-high school graduates without a GED. Receipt of an official state certificate was found to increase the level of benefits which the individual received in civilian life.

In an investigation of delayed high school completion, Dhanidina and Griffith (1975) assessed participant perceptions of the costs and benefits of earning a GED high school equivalency certificate. Regression analyses revealed that current income is a better predictor of future earnings than age, anticipated schooling, and anticipated occupation and salary increases.

Ayers (1980) surveyed 50 randomly selected adults who had attained their GED through a community college program in 1978 to determine: (1) the usefulness of GED preparation in gaining employment and in obtaining promotions and salary increases; (2) the percentage of GED graduates who were enrolled in a postsecondary institution; and (3) the usefulness of the GED program in preparing students for future academic success in terms of college grade point average (GPA). The major findings of the study, based on 36 respondents, indicate that *49% of the graduates were employed full time, 12% were employed part time, 9% were unemployed, and 21% were in college. Of the employed graduates, 35% indicated that the GED program was helpful in gaining employment, 15% said the program helped them attain a promotion, and 19% related their GED participation to salary increases.*

Cervero and Peterson (1982) conducted a study to assess the impact that passing the GED tests has on adults' employment and participation in educational activities. A 20% random sample of a nationally representative sample of GED candidates (N=1,906) was surveyed (response rate 24%, N=458). Results indicated that 71% passed the test; an additional 15% passed prior to the follow-up survey (N=345) conducted 18 months later. *Results indicated that the GED credential was more helpful to people in obtaining a new job (52%) than in improving their situation in their current job (about 20%).* During the 18 months following the initial survey, 45% of the respondents were students in some type of educational program. More than 75% planned to attend an educational program in the future.

In a series of follow-up studies conducted to examine the employment, education, and training activities of persons who had taken the General Education Development (GED) Tests in the spring of 1980, Reed and others (1984) administered two nationwide surveys of GED graduates, in fall 1981 and spring 1982, and a statewide survey, in spring 1984. They analyzed survey responses from 458 and 650 completed surveys, respectively, from the national samples and 544 from the State of Maryland. *Significant numbers of respondents reported that passing the GED helped them either find jobs or obtain salary increases, enabled them to develop an enhanced sense of self-worth, and pleased their families.* Many of the GED graduates recommended the program to others. The researchers concluded that these results suggest that millions of adults could benefit by successfully earning an equivalency credential.

Is a GED "as Good as" a High School Diploma?

According to the American Council on Education, "GED Diplomas are recognized nationwide by employers, educators, and others as equivalent to a high school diploma" ("GED Fact Sheet"). However, in a large-scale study produced for the National Bureau of Economic Research using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), Cameron and Heckman (1991) challenge ACE claims and present econometric, statistical, and other evidence on "the nonequivalence of high school equivalents."

A main conclusion of the study is that persons who receive an exam-certified high school equivalent, GED recipients, are statistically indistinguishable from high school dropouts in terms of their labor market status. Both dropouts and GED recipients have comparably poor wages, earnings, hours of work, unemployment experiences, and job tenure. GED-certified persons are intermediate between high school dropouts and traditional high school graduates in their economic standing but are much closer to the former than the latter. GED recipients have lower wages and hours of work than traditional high school graduates.

This conclusion is strengthened when years of schooling completed is taken into account. According to the researchers, *whatever difference is found among GED recipients, dropouts, and high school graduates is largely accounted for by years of schooling.* In their data, dropouts completed one fewer year of schooling, on average, than GED recipients. Almost 60% of the GED recipients completed 11 years of schooling compared to only 33% of the dropouts. About 45% of the dropouts had nine or fewer years of schooling compared to only 10% of the GED recipients. At the same completed schooling level, a GED earns only 1% more than a high school dropout. GED recipients with 11 years of schooling earn only 3% less than high school graduates. High school graduates earn statistically significantly higher wages only when compared to GED recipients or dropouts with 10 or fewer years of schooling.

Whatever economic return exists from GED recipiency, the researchers hold, *arises from its value in opening postsecondary schooling and training opportunities.* GED recipients are more likely to take postsecondary training and schooling than high school dropouts. However, GED recipients take less postsecondary training (except for military training) or schooling than high school graduates and are less likely to attend and complete such programs than high school graduates. More important, GED recipients receive lower returns for their years of schooling, even for their college education. In this study, high school graduates who completed two-year colleges earned 6% more than GED-certified males with two years of college. The available evidence, the researchers observe, indicates that the GED recipients who attend college take a more vocationally oriented curriculum than high school graduates.

The researchers conclude that there are no statistically precise "sheepskin" or "certification" effects above and beyond what is signified by a person's years of attained schooling. They state, "The GED cannot, after all, turn a sow's ear into a silk purse. There is no cheap way to acquire the skills obtained from conventional classroom instruction" (p. 20). From this finding, they contend that, despite the large and growing demand for GED's, it is not appropriate to consider the GED as an educational end in itself, and education programs with this focus are misguided.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE INQUIRY

To determine whether the services provided to AISD dropouts by the dropout recovery programs were beneficial, longitudinal follow-up of the students, especially those who obtained a GED, would be required. The following are some questions to be included in a follow-up study.

- What percentage of AISD dropouts served by the dropout recovery programs are enrolled in postsecondary institutions--two- and four-year colleges and trade, technical, and business schools?
- For those who are students, how do their attrition rates in college compare to students who were high school graduates?
- How do their GPA's in college compare to students who were high school graduates?
- What percentage are employed, full time and part time?
- What percentage are in the armed services?
- What job-related benefits do they perceive resulted from their studies in the dropout recovery programs? Were they better able to obtain employment, be promoted, get a salary increase, or get a better job?
- What other benefits do they believe resulted from their participation in the dropout recovery programs (e.g., personal satisfaction, enhanced feelings of self-worth, improved family relations)?

BIBLIOGRAPHIY

Auten, R. (1994, July 22). Grading the AIL contract: The promise of a diploma. The Austin Chronicle, 15, 18, 19.

Ayers, C.V. (1980). An educational and employment growth study of general educational development (GED) graduates of Surry Community College. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Nova University, North Carolina.

Beusse, W. E. (1972). In-service and post-service benefits of GED program participation (Report No. AFTRL-TR-73-65). Washington, D.C.: Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DOD).

Cameron, S.V., & Heckman, J.J. (1991). The nonequivalence of high school equivalents (Working Paper No. 3804). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Cervero, R.M., & Peterson, N.L. (1982). After the GED tests: employment and training activities of GED examinees (Report No. 4). Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, General Educational Development Testing Service.

Dewar, R.L., & Strong, B. (1991). No diploma, no job. The American School Board Journal, October, 38-39.

Dhanidina, L., & Griffith, W.S. (1975). Costs and benefits of delayed high school completion. Adult Education, 25 (4), 217-230.

GED Fact Sheet. (1990, November/December). GED Items, p.3.

GED graduates show high literacy skills. (1991, December). Supervision, p.12.

Reed, N.V. (1984, November). Two years after the GED tests: Employment, education, and training activities of GED examinees. Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference, Louisville, KY.

Sabino, M.J., & Seaman, D.F. (1988). Follow-up of GED completers: An analysis of eight studies in the U.S. and Canada. Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research, 2 (7), 4-6.

Sanchez, M. (1994, April). 1992-93 dropout report (ORE Publication No. 93.17). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation.

Texas Department of Commerce: Work Force Development Division. (1992). JTPA MIS user manual.

Valentine, T., & Darkenwald, G.G. (1986). The benefits of GED graduation and a typology of graduates. Adult Education Quarterly, 37 (1), 23-37.

LIST OF FIGURES AND ATTACHMENTS

FIGURE

1 Number of Students Served by CRLC and 78702 RAYS, 1993-94 6

2 AISD Schools Last Attended by Schools Served by 78702 RAYS and CRLC, 1993-94 8

3 Grade Level, Sex, Ethnicity, and Age of the Students Served by 78702 RAYS and CRLC, 1993-94 9

4 Program Outcomes, CRLC and 78702 RAYS, 1993-94 10

5 Student Attendance, CRLC and 78702 RAYS, 1993-94 10

6 Middle Earth Dropout Recovery Program, Students Served and Monies Disbursed, 1993-94 14

7 American Institute for Learning Dropout Recovery Program, Students Served and Monies Disbursed, 1993-94 14

8 Contents of the GED Tests 20

ATTACHMENT

1 Board Agenda Item and Contract with the American Institute for Learning (AIL) 28

2 Board Agenda Item and Contract with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. 34

3 TEA "Requirements for a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency" 41

4 Subchapter E of the Texas Education Code Dealing with "General Education Development" . 42

5 Sample GED Tests 48

SUBJECT: Proposed Contract with American Institute for Learning (AIL) for Dropout Recovery Program

PRESENTER: Toni R. Turk
Area Superintendent

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The SBOE rule on Community-Based Alternative Education Programs enables the District, should it wish, to contract with the American Institute for Learning and/or other community-based organizations for alternative education programs.

Currently AIL is serving 200+ AISD dropouts. The proposed contract would enable the District to re-enroll, through AIL, those students in a diploma or GED preparation program and at the same time reduce our reported dropout rate.

In return, AIL would receive the state revenue netted by the eligible students served based on their average daily attendance less a processing fee equal to the Texas Education Agency established indirect cost rate (2.303% for 1993-94).

Previously, AISD questioned whether the proposed contract with AIL would be legal or not. However, with the passage of Senate Bill 7 it was revealed that this would be a legal process. Specifically:

> "Sec. 23.34. **CONTRACTS FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.** The board of trustees of an independent school district may contract with a public or private entity for that entity to provide educational services for the district."

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Advantages

1. Will reduce our reported dropout rate since the students at AIL will be in an approved dropout recovery program.

2. Will provide AISD with another option for serving at-risk students at the high school level. AIL has already been serving at-risk youth.

3. Low cost per student.

4. More GED's may be reported.

Disadvantages

1. Time required by AISD staff to coordinate program and review program effectiveness.

2. Expansion of students to be served at AIL could lower our TAAS and NAPT averages since these students, as dropouts, were previously unreported.

3. Cost of providing transportation which will be Capital Metro bus passes to eligible students. The cost is $5.00 per pass, per month - the total cost for 200 eligible students for a six (6) month period is $6,000.

4. Senate Bill 7 also provides a new problem in that funds will not flow to the District in 1993-94 because of the changes in state funding from Senate Bill 7. Senate Bill 7 bases 1993-94 state funding on projected enrollment, not actual enrollment. Adjustments are part of the 1994-95 state funding process. Therefore, School Support Services needs to add approximately $180,000 (projected state funds for 200 students generated by the American Institute for Learning's average daily attendance) to the 1993-94 budget for the contract.

5. Any other private school, whether profit or nonprofit (except parochial), could reasonably ask the district to consider a similar agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board approve the contract with American Institute for Learning (AIL).

ACTION REQUIRED

Board approval.

CONTACT PERSONS

Toni R. Turk
Gloria L. Williams

A PLAN FOR CONTRACTED SERVICES BETWEEN AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT AND AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING

TAC89.42 permits a school district to "enter into a performance-based contractual agreement to provide academic services to recovered dropouts and identified at-risk students with a community-based organization."

Therefore, the Austin Independent School District shall contract, effective July 26, 1993, with the American Institute for Learning, 422 Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701, to serve eligible Austin ISD recovered dropouts. This contract shall be accompanied by the most recent annual financial statement of the American Institute for Learning.

The contract is for school year 1993-94, renewable at the parties' option.

The plan for contracted services is as follows:

I.

The American Institute for Learning shall:

1. verify with Austin ISD's Department of Student Records and Reports the eligibility (based on age, residence, and dropout status) of students to be served under this contract;

2. account for enrollment and attendance of eligible students in accordance with instructions in the Daily Register of Pupil Attendance;

3. employ TEA certificated instructional staff who possess at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university;

4. a. provide appropriate instruction to assure the mastery of essential elements, document such mastery, and make the documentation available for review by Austin ISD officials and the Texas Education Agency; and/or

   b. complete the requirement for a GED, including instruction, pre-test and post-test at a GED accredited testing center;

5. transmit to Austin ISD, according to written procedures, the grades, course credit data, and information on the student assessment program as required in TEC21.551;

6. cooperate with Austin ISD's Office of Research and Evaluation in data collection and program evaluation;

7. assist Austin ISD in administering the student assessment program as required in TEC21.551;

8. provide for the cost of diplomas awarded to students upon successful completion of high school graduation requirements -- cost for the diploma is approximately $1.10 per diploma;

9. participate on a routine basis with activities in AISD's Area 4;

10. provide TAAS tutorial supports; and

11. be accountable for textbooks furnished.

II.

The Austin Independent School District shall:

1. provide textbooks and teacher editions according to state code;

2. provide transportation to eligible students to the alternative education program and to the test site for the student assessment program, the cost for providing transportation for 200 students utilizing Capital Metro bus passes at $5.00 per student, per month for six (6) months is $6,000 (six thousand dollars);

3. administer the student assessment program as required in TEC21.551 and report the results of such testing;

4. designate personnel to monitor the performance terms stated herein;

5. award a diploma from Evening High School to a student upon successful completion of high school graduation requirements and allow that student to participate in graduation ceremonies at Evening High School;

6. Pay to the American Institute for Learning each semester that portion of the state share of the Foundation School Program that is netted by the ADA of Austin ISD students who attend the American Institute for Learning under this contract minus the Austin ISD processing fee which is equal to the TEA established indirect cost rate (2.303% for 1993-94) of those funds.

   The Net State Share is defined as the total State payment of ADA-based funds to the Austin Independent School District less the local fund assignment of the Austin Independent School District and all other deductions from State funds received by the School District so that the total amount paid to AIL will not exceed the net amount of State funds received by the School District reduced by the processing fee.

AIL will receive a payment of 33% of the estimated funds due for the year at the end of the first and second semesters. This estimate will be based on the ADA that has been generated at the end of each semester. A final payment of the balance due will be made at the end of the AIL summer program.

Superintendent of Schools, Austin ISD	Chief Executive Officer, AIL
President of the Board of Trustees	Chair of Board, AIL
Date	Date

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED AISD/AIL CONTRACT

1. According to Senate Bill 7, funding for any additional students in 1993-94 above Printout 401 will take place in 1994-95. Will AIL be willing to delay payments from AISD until the State funds are received from TEA even if this means waiting until the 1994-95 school year?

   AIL will have to be paid at the end of each semester (fall, spring, and summer), according to the language in AISD item #6.

2. The actual payment to AISD, after local fund assignment and other deductions, is approximately $900 per student in average daily attendance. Will AIL be willing to teach AISD students for that amount minus a processing fee equal to the Texas Education Agency established indirect cost rate (2.303% for 1993-94)?

   Yes.

3. The formula for payment in the agreement does not appear to correctly state our understanding of a payment process.

   AISD item #6 has been reviewed and corrected on the revised contract.

4. TEA attendance requirements dictate that student attendance be determined at a set time for the school. If a student is at school at that time, he/she is present for the day; if not, he/she is absent for the day. In AISD elementary schools, attendance is determined at 10:00 a.m. In secondary schools, attendance is determined at 10 minutes after the beginning of second period. How will AIL be able to comply with this requirement?

   Attendance requirements can be met. AIL has three four-hour blocks of instruction. The blocks of time are 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon; 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.; and 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m.

5. Will curriculum be pre-approved by AISD?

   AIL is willing to have their curriculum reviewed and approved by AISD.

6. Will AIL use State-adopted textbooks? If so, how will AISD account to the State for textbooks provided and how will AISD know what textbooks to purchase? Is this legal?

   AIL will require State-adopted textbooks. According to TEA, the students enrolled at AIL would be considered eligible AISD students and, therefore, should have access to textbooks. What books, how many, and accountability would need to be worked out between AISD and AIL.

7. If AISD enters into this contract, will AISD be required to enter into similar contracts with other private or nonprofit institutions, or is this contract based upon facts which are distinguishable from other private schools, residential facilities, and other institutions?

AISD would not be required to enter into contracts with other private schools, but could. Public schools cannot contract with parochial schools where there would be an excessive entanglement with religion.

8. Can a private school continue to collect tuition from students who are also claimed for State support through this contract?

Private schools cannot collect tuition from students who are also claimed for State support.

9. What liability to the students/parents does AISD incur by contracting for teaching of AISD students at a facility where no AISD employees are assigned?

AIL carries liability insurance.

SUBJECT: Alternative Diploma Program at the Alternative Learning Center Through the RAYS Collaboration, a Dropout Recovery Program

PRESENTER: Paul Turner
Area Director
Area 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Reaching All Youth Services (RAYS) Collaboration links eleven key partners in the Austin community. The City of Austin, Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc., Communities in Schools, Austin Community College, Austin/Travis County Youth Services, Inc., Southwest Correctional Arts Network (SCAN), Austin Independent School District, Texas Youth Commission, Central East Austin Community Organization (CEACO), Resource Network, and the RAYS Steering Committee have worked together to bring a multitude of economic, health, social and educational services to the underserved residents of East Austin.

The RAYS Collaboration targets children and youth aged 0-16 and up to 21 for GED services. The geographic target area is East Austin with priority given to Alternative Learning Center (ALC) students and their families, as well as children, youth and families residing in zip code geographical area 78702 and peripheral communities, and youth and families from the greater Austin community as appropriate. Eighty percent (80%) of the residents in the 78702 zip code who are older than 25 years of age have neither a GED nor a high school diploma.

RAYS has been housed in portable classroom space on the Alternative Learning Center campus. They have provided case management, crisis intervention, counseling services with special emphasis on teen parents, their children, and younger siblings, drug and alcohol counseling, and GED preparation services for those students no longer in school.

The RAYS program budget totals $341,000 of which $278,000 is funded by the City of Austin with the remainder provided by grants and other Collaboration members. Over 2,000 individuals would be reached through the program. The budget funds 4.8 staff positions at Middle Earth, 4.5 staff members with other service providers, and two youth workers for direct assistance to individuals. The Collaboration members, volunteers, and the community are making contributions to the total budget to ensure cost-effective services to the community. The RAYS programs will make a long-term contribution to the City of Austin community by reducing juvenile delinquency, gang activity, teen pregnancy, dropout rates and by empowering community members with parenting and communication skills and by providing access to education, health, and employment services.

The RAYS Collaboration is requesting the continued support of the Austin Independent School District as they expand their services. They want to offer a competency-based curriculum leading to a high school diploma during the 1993-94 school year. This program would be scheduled as an evening program on the Alternative Learning Center campus and would serve up to 50 students. The purpose of this program would be to provide an alternative for dropout recovery with the 78702 zip code geographical

area as the primary target area.

The SBOE rules on Community-Based Alternative Education Programs enables the District to contract with community-based organizations to provide alternative education programs. This proposal would establish contracts with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc., the fiscal agent for the RAYS Collaboration, and allow the enrollment of students into an alternative diploma or GED preparation program and at the same time reduce our reported dropout rate.

In return, the RAYS Collaboration with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. as fiscal agent, would receive the state revenue netted by the eligible students served based on their average daily attendance less a processing fee equal to the Texas Education Agency established indirect cost rate (2.303% for 1993-94).

Senate Bill 7 gives the legal basis upon which this contract will be based Specifically:

"**Section 23.34. Contracts for Educational Services.** The board of trustees of an independent school district may contract with a public or private entity for that entity to provide educational services for the district."

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Benefits to Students

1. The provision of a diploma program on the Alternative Learning Center site would expand options and provide access to East Austin residents. The other AISD Zenith diploma opportunities are available on the Evening High School, McCallum High School, and Robbins High School campuses all of which are west of I-35.

2. The holistic approach which is employed by the RAYS Collaboration targets families for case management for youth and families. In addition to the youth who are served, siblings and other family members receive counseling, family therapy, and crisis intervention if needed. This approach helps families gain access to the educational and social services available through the collaboration.

3. This program would extend the learning experiences available to students in the typical alternative diploma program using projects, experiential learning, and for future development a performing arts curriculum.

4. This expansion would provide the support staff needed to designate this site as a GED test site which would make this service more accessible. A limited number of scholarships to pay the GED test fee would be available.

5. Support services for teen parents including a CEDEN (Center for Education Development and Nutrition) family development specialist available to screen children of teen parents for developmental delay with referral for early intervention if needed, other essential baby items and

bus passes for transportation will be made available to the students served.

Advantages

1. This program would expand our dropout recovery efforts into a very high need area.

2. Since the RAYS Collaboration has been operating as a support to the ALC this past year, and space is available on the ALC campus, expansion to a diploma program can be accomplished with no out-of-pocket expenses to the District.

3. This program provides a holistic approach to assisting not only the students served but their families as well. This access to and coordination of social services helps participants benefit more fully from the educational services provided.

4. The support of this collaborative effort among several social agencies demonstrates the commitment of the District to provide cost effective educational services in collaboration with other social services provided.

Disadvantages

1. Additional staff time to coordinate and review the program's effectiveness will be needed.

2. TAAS and NAPT averages could be lower as more relative lower achieving student scores are reported.

3. Senate Bill 7 does not provide immediate funding in the 1993-94 school year because of the changes in state funding processes. Senate Bill 7 based 1993-94 state funding on projected enrollment, not actual enrollment. Adjustments are part of the 1994-95 state funding process. Therefore, the District would have to fund $45,000 (projected state funds for the 50 students generated by the RAYS Collaboration's average daily attendance) to the 1993-94 budget for the contract.

Costs

1. The Collaboration is requesting that the District permit the operation of the program from two additional portable buildings available on the Alternative Learning Center campus. On the campus the RAYS Collaboration has operated in two portables last year and this request would expand their program to four portables for 1993-94.

2. The Collaboration requests the use of funding realized by the recovery of school-aged dropouts into this program to defray the cost of the staffing and program costs associated with the start-up of the program. Collaboration funding will provide funding for any costs not covered by the ADA funding the District would receive for the attendance of school-aged students in this alternative diploma program. Utility costs of $3,400.00 would be paid from these funds by the RAYS Collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Trustees approve the contract with Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc., to initiate an alternative diploma program on the Alternative Learning Center site.

ACTION REQUIRED

Board approval.

CONTACT PERSONS

E. R. Hinojosa, Jr.
Paul Turner

A PLAN FOR CONTRACTED SERVICES BETWEEN AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT AND MIDDLE EARTH UNLIMITED, INC.

TAC89.42 permits a school district to "enter into a performance-based contractual agreement to provide academic services to recovered dropouts and identified at-risk students with a community-based organization."

Therefore, the Austin Independent School District shall contract, effective October 11, 1993, with the Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc., 3816 South 1st Street, Austin, Texas 78704, to serve eligible Austin ISD dropouts. This contract shall be accompanied by the most recent annual financial statement of the Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc.

The contract is for school year 1993-94, renewable at the parties' option.

The plan for contracted services is as follows:

I.

Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. shall:

1. verify with Austin ISD's Department of Student Records and Reports the eligibility (based on age, residence, and dropout status) of students to be served under this contract;

2. serve only those students who meet the age and residence requirement and who are considered dropouts under our District's dropout identification criteria;

3. account for enrollment and attendance of eligible students in accordance with instructions in the Daily Register of Pupil Attendance;

4. employ TEA certificated instructional staff who possess at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university:

5. a. provide appropriate instruction to assure the mastery of essential elements, document such mastery, and make the documentation available for review by Austin ISD officials and the Texas Education Agency; and/or

   b. provide GED instruction, including pre-testing and post-testing at a GED accredited testing center;

6. transmit to Austin ISD, according to written procedures, the grades, course credit date, and information on the student assessment program as required in TEC21.551;

7. cooperate with Austin ISD's Office of Research and Evaluation in data collection and program evaluation;

8. assist Austin ISD in administering the student assessment program as required in TEC21.551;

9. provide for the cost of diplomas awarded to students upon successful completion of high school graduation requirements -- cost for the diploma is approximately $1.10 per diploma;

10. participate on a routine basis with activities in AISD's Area 2;

11. provide TAAS tutorial support; and

12. be accountable for textbooks furnished.

II.

The Austin I.S.D. shall,

1. provide textbooks and teacher editions according to state code;

2. administer the student assessment program as required in TEC21.551 and report the results of such testing;

3. designate personnel to monitor the performance terms stated herein;

4. award a diploma from the Evening High School to a student upon successful completion of high school graduation requirements and allow that student to participate in graduation ceremonies at the Evening High School;

5. pay to Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. each semester that portion of the state share of the Foundation School Program that is netted by the ADA of Austin ISD students who attend the Alternative Learning Center under this contract minus the Austin ISD processing fee which is equal to the TEA established indirect cost rate (2.303% for 1993-94) of those funds.

   The Net State Share is defined as the total State payment of ADA-based funds to the Austin Independent School District less the local fund assignment of the Austin Independent School District and all other deductions from State funds received by the School District so that the total amount paid to Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. will not exceed the net amount of State funds received by the School District reduced by the processing fee.

Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. will receive a payment of 33% of the estimated funds due for the year at the end of the first and second semesters. This estimate will be based on the ADA that has been generated at the end of each semester. A final payment of the balance due will be made at the end of the Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc. summer program.

Superintendent of Schools, Austin Independent School District	Chief Executive Officer, Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc.
President, Board of Trustees	Chair of Board, Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc.
Date	Date

Attachment 3

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY 1701 NORTH CONGRESS AVENUE • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-1494 • (512) 463-9734

REQUIREMENTS FOR A TEXAS CERTIFICATE OF HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY

Requirements for Issuance of Certificate:

1. Minimum Test Scores: A standard score of 40 on each of the five tests or an average score of 45 on all five tests.

2. Minimum Age: Must be 18 years old. The following are also eligible:

   a. a person who is at least 17 years old, is not enrolled in school and has parental or guardian permission to test. (Seventeen-year-olds who are married, who have entered military service, who have been declared adults by the court, or who have otherwise legally severed the child-parent relationship are not required to present parental or guardian permission to be tested.)

   b. a person who is a least 16 years old

      - who is enrolled in an **official** High School Equivalency Examination Pilot Program; or

      - who is recommended by a public agency which has supervision or custody of the person under court order. Recommendations must include the applicant's name, date of birth, and must be signed by an official of the public agency.

3. Residence: Must be a resident of the state or a member of the United States armed forces stationed at a Texas installation. There is no time requirement for residency. Immigration status is not an issue.

4. Educational Status: Must be officially withdrawn from school **unless** enrolled in an **official** High School Equivalency Examination Pilot Program. Must not have received a high school diploma from an accredited high school in the United States. (Graduates of unaccredited schools and foreign high schools are eligible to test.)

Requirements for Retesting:

Applicant must wait six months before retesting. If the applicant is tutored by a certified teacher or participates in an adult education program, retesting may occur when the instructor determines that the applicant is prepared.

Fee:

$10.00. (Fees are waived for residents and inmates of health and correctional facilities.)

SUBCHAPTER E. GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

§89.111 Policy.

Statutory Citation

Texas Education Code, §11.35: High School Equivalency Examinations.

"(a) The State Board of Education shall provide for the administration of high school equivalency examinations. A person who does not have a high school diploma and is at least 17 years of age, or is at least 16 years of age if a public agency providing supervision of the person or having custody of the person under a court order recommends that the person take the examination, may take the examination in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated by the board if the person is over the age of 17 or:

"(1) is 16 years of age or older; and

"(2) a public agency providing supervision of the person or having custody of the person under a court order recommends that the person take the examination.

"(b) The board by rule shall fix and require payment of a fee as a condition to the issuance of a high school equivalency certificate and a copy of the scores of the examinations. The fee must be reasonable and designed to cover the administrative costs of issuing the certificate and a copy of the scores. The board may not require a waiting period between the date a person withdraws from school and the date the person takes the examination unless the period relates to the time between administrations of the examination."

Rule

The Central Education Agency shall be the only agency in Texas authorized to issue a certificate of high school equivalency on the basis of the General Educational Development tests. Tests shall be administered by authorized contracted testing centers in accordance with applicable state law and rules of the American Council on Education and the State Board of Education.

§89.112 Official Testing Centers.

(a) When authorized by the Central Education Agency, official testing centers shall be established by annual contract with an accredited school district, institution of higher learning, or service center. The testing center must be located at a high school in an accredited district, an adult learning center, an accredited institution of higher learning, or education service center. The chief administrative officer of a school, institution, or education service center desiring

to provide the General Educational Development testing service to residents in the community must request authorization to do so from the Central Education Agency. If the need for a testing center in the location exists, the appropriate agency official, in writing, shall inform the American Council on Education that the establishment of an official testing center is authorized at that particular institution. The center will be sent four copies of an annual contract by the American Council on Education, together with order forms and other material relating to the operation of the testing center. The contract forms must be signed by the chief administrative officer of the school, institution, or education service center.

(b) The chief administrative officer of the school, institution or education service center at which an official testing center is established must agree to maintain test records permanently and to provide appropriate storage for restricted test materials and a suitable place for administering the test. Each center is responsible for selection and ordering of test materials.

(c) The administrative officer of a school district or education service center must designate a certified counselor and the officer of an institution of higher education must designate a professional person with a background in testing and counseling to serve as chief examiner. The person designated chief examiner shall not be involved in the preparation of persons for the examinations. The chief administrative officer must obtain prior authorization from the Central Education Agency to change the chief examiner or the location of a testing center. The person designated chief examiner must attend annual training conducted by the Central Education Agency.

(d) Testing centers may transport restricted test material to county, state, or municipal correctional and health facilities if authorization to do so has been obtained. The chief administrative officer of an institution housing an official testing center and the administrator of the correctional or health facility must request authorization to provide the testing services from the Central Education Agency. Only the exact number of tests needed at a test session may be transported, and the scoring and reporting of test results must be done at the official test center site. Testing services at correctional or health facilities shall be limited to inmates or patients of the facility, and the tests must be administered by an employee of the school district, institution of higher learning or education service center housing the test center.

(e) The authorization to function as an official testing center may be withdrawn by the Central Education Agency when a center has failed to maintain the integrity of the testing program. The agency may suspend testing at a center if restricted test material is reported missing or if conditions reported by the Central Education Agency monitoring visit

indicate that the testing center is in violation of State Board of Education rules or requirements of the American Council on Education.

(f) Official testing centers may charge a fee for test administration. The amount of the fee shall be determined by the administration or by the board of the school district, institution, or education service center.

(g) The administration or board of an institution housing an official testing center shall have a written policy concerning the operation of the center. This policy must provide for annual reports by the chief administrative officer or chief examiner of the testing center concerning the center to the administration or board of each institution; however, such reports must include the number of tests administered and fees received.

§89.113 Eligibility for a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency.

(a) The requirements which applicants for certificates of high school equivalency shall meet are as follows:

(1) Residence. Must be a resident of the state or a member of the United States armed forces stationed at a Texas installation.

(2) Age. Must be 18 years old. A 17-year-old is eligible with parental or guardian consent. Seventeen-year-olds must present written permission signed by their parent or guardian. Seventeen-year-olds who are married, who have entered military service, who have been declared adults by the court, or who have otherwise legally severed the child/parent relationship are not required to present parent or guardian permission to be tested. Any applicant who is at least 16 years old may test if recommended by a public agency having supervision or custody under a court order. Recommendations must include the applicant's name and date of birth and must be signed by an official of the public agency having supervision or custody of the person under a court order.

(3) Educational status. Must not be enrolled in school and must not have received a high school diploma from an accredited high school in the United States. Test centers shall require that a 17-year-old applicant whose sixteenth birthday was prior to September 1, 1989, present a letter from the resident district stating that the applicant is not in attendance and has not earned sufficient high school credits to be reasonably expected to graduate.

(4) Minimum test scores. Must achieve a standard score of 40 or above on each of the five parts of the test or achieve an average standard score of 45 on all five parts of the test. Persons who achieved scores of 35 on each of the five tests prior to January 1, 1959, may be issued certificates.

(b) Test centers shall verify that persons being tested meet the eligibility requirements in this section.

§89.114 Identification.

Test centers shall require examinees to present a driver's license or Texas Department of Public Safety identification card, or a notarized statement bearing the examinee's name, date of birth, recent photograph, and signature.

§89.115 Retesting.

(a) Examinees who fail to achieve a minimum passing score on one or more of the tests may retest on the tests which they failed. Persons desiring to retest must wait six months to do so unless they present a letter from an adult preparation program or a certified teacher verifying that the individual is prepared to retest. Each retest must be on a different form of the test.

(b) Retests may not be administered to an individual who has achieved at least the minimum acceptable scores for issuance of the Texas certificate of high school equivalency.

§89.116 Testing the Handicapped.

(a) Physically disabled persons who are unable to mark an answer sheet may be assisted by the chief examiner or proctor. The examinee must read the questions without assistance and indicate the answer for the proctor to mark.

(b) Severely handicapped or ill persons who cannot travel to the test center may be administered the tests at home. Prior approval to transport the tests shall be requested from the Central Education Agency by the chief examiner.

(c) Applicants who are unable to take the printed form of the test may be administered a taped version of the test upon written authorization of the Central Education Agency. A request by the chief examiner must be accompanied by certification by a physician that verifies a medical diagnosis of the disability which renders the potential examinee unable to take the printed form of the test.

(d) Applicants who are visually handicapped may take the test in a braille, large print, or taped version. Versions of the test in these forms are available from the Central Education Agency.

§89.117 Reporting Test Scores.

(a) Test centers shall send a report of test results to the Central Education Agency for all persons who pass the test.

(b) Written confirmation of test scores shall be provided to examinees as soon as possible after testing.

(c) The official report of test results, a signed GEDTS Form 30, shall be used only to report scores to an official test center, to the Central Education Agency, or to another state department of education.

(d) Test reports shall indicate the version administered: audiotape, large print, braille, English, French, or Spanish.

§89.118 Issuance of the Certificate.

(a) Test scores shall be accepted as official only when reported directly by official testing centers, the Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support, directors of Veterans Administration hospitals, and, in special cases, by the General Educational Development Testing Service.

(b) Following review for eligibility and approval, certificates will be issued directly to clients. A nonrefundable fee of $10.00 will be assessed for issuance of certificates. Fees for issuance of certificates shall be waived for residents and inmates of city, county, state and federal health and correctional facilities. A permanent file will be maintained for all certificates issued.

(c) The certificate of high school equivalency shall indicate the version of the test taken by the applicant: audiotape, large print, braille, English, French, or Spanish.

(d) The state administrator of General Educational Development may disapprove issuance of a certificate or may cancel a certificate under the following conditions:

(1) an applicant does not meet eligibility requirements stated in §89.113 of this title (relating to Eligibility for a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency);

(2) the applicant in any way violates security of the restricted test material;

(3) the applicant presents fraudulent identification or is not who he or she purports to be;

(4) the applicant uses another person's certificate or test scores in an attempt to defraud; or

(5) the applicant willingly allows another person to use his or her certificate or test scores in an attempt to defraud.

(e) In the case of non-issuance or cancellation of certificates, the applicant shall be notified in writing by the administrator of General Educational Development that the certificate will not be issued or may be cancelled.

(f) An applicant who has been notified that his or her certificate will not be issued or may be cancelled may appeal to the state administrator for General Educational Development within thirty days of receipt of written notification.

(g) If, after further review, the state administrator for General Educational Development does not approve issuance of the certificate or cancels a certificate, this decision may be appealed to the commissioner of education in accordance with Chapter 157 of this title (relating to Hearings and Appeals).

§89.119 State Administrator.

The commissioner of education shall designate the state administrator of the General Educational Development testing and certificate of high school equivalency program.

TEST TWO: SOCIAL STUDIES

The GED Social Studies Test contains multiple-choice questions drawn from the following content areas.

- History
- Economics
- Political Science
- Geography
- Behavioral Sciences
  - anthropology
  - psychology
  - sociology

(Note that there are different U.S. and Canadian versions of the GED Social Studies Test.)

Most of the questions in the Social Studies Test refer to information provided. The information may be a paragraph, or it may be a chart, table, graph, map, cartoon, or figure. In every case, to answer the questions in the Social Studies Test, you must understand, use, analyze, or evaluate the information provided.

Directions and Sample Questions for Social Studies

Directions: Choose the one best answer to each item.

Items 1 and 2 refer to the following information.

Five amendments to the U.S. Constitution directly affect voting qualifications.

The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, prohibited states from using race or color as standards for determining the right to vote.

The Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in 1920, prohibited the states from using gender as a voting qualification.

The Twenty-Third Amendment, ratified in 1961, granted the residents of Washington, D.C., a voice in the selection of the President and Vice President.

The Twenty-Fourth Amendment, ratified in 1964, outlawed the state poll tax as a requirement for voting in national elections.

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment, ratified in 1971, prohibited states from denying the vote to anyone 18 years old or over.

1. The overall effect of the five amendments was to extend the vote to

   (1) a larger portion of U.S. citizens
   (2) a limited number of citizens
   (3) tax-paying citizens
   (4) citizens qualified by race and gender
   (5) those citizens who must pay for the privilege

Correct Answer: 1
Difficulty Level: Easy

To answer question 1 correctly, you must read and understand all of the information provided regarding the five amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Then you must decide which of the options provided best states the *overall* effect of the amendments.

A careful reading of the amendments should indicate to you that, in each case, the effect of the amendment was to extend voting rights to more citizens. Option (2) is a correct statement (citizens under 18 are not able to vote), but Option (2) is not the *best* answer to the question. The best answer is Option (1) which describes the *overall* effect of the five amendments. The *overall* effect of these amendments was to provide voting rights to *more* citizens.

2. Which statement about the five amendments appears to be the best summary?

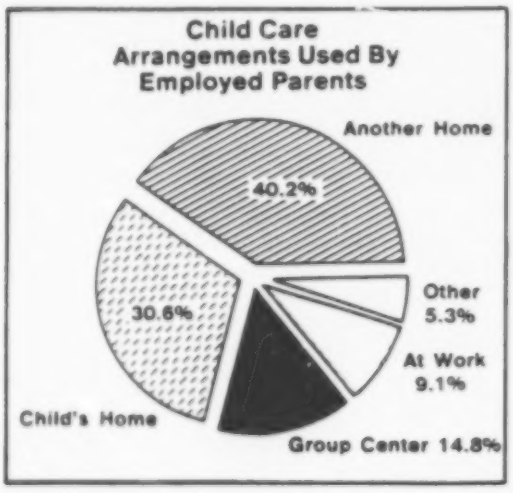
   (1) They affirm the right of women to vote.
   (2) They limit the right of U.S. citizens to vote according to where they live.
   (3) They prohibit the use of certain requirements as voting qualifications.
   (4) They prohibit some citizens from voting.
   (5) They permit certain qualifications to be used in voting.

Correct Answer: 3
Difficulty Level: Difficult

The key word in question 2 is *summary*. This is important to recognize, because several of the options present correct and accurate statements, but only one presents the best *summary*.

Remember that an effective summary statement must provide the *main points* made by the information. In this case, the summary statement must address *all five* of the amendments. Only option (3) does this by referring to the prohibition of "certain requirements as voting qualifications."

Item 3 refers to the following information.



3. Which statement is supported by information in the graph?

   (1) Most parents are employed.
   (2) Most parents are satisfied with their child-care arrangements.
   (3) A group center is the most common arrangement used by employed parents.
   (4) Most employed parents arrange for child care either in their own home or in someone else's home.
   (5) About a quarter of all employed parents use child-care facilities at their place of work.

Correct Answer: 4
Difficulty Level: Moderately difficult

About one out of every three or four questions in the Social Studies Test will refer to a map, figure, chart, or graph.

This question requires you to evaluate each of the statements to determine which one can be supported by information in the graph. To do this, you must first understand what information is being provided in the graph.

Finding the correct answer is then a matter of *testing* each of the statements against the graph to see if it can be supported. In questions like this one, it is most important that you select your answer *only* on the basis of the information provided, not on the basis of opinions or prior knowledge.

In this case, the statement in option (4) is supported by the fact that the sections of the graph that relate to the child's own home or another home add up to 70.8%, which accounts for most parents.

TEST THREE: SCIENCE

The GED Science Test contains multiple-choice questions drawn from the following content areas:

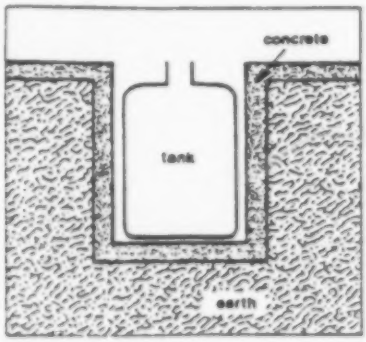
- Biology
- Earth Science
- Physics
- Chemistry

All questions in the Science Test require you to *use* information provided in the test question or learned through life experience. The information may be a paragraph, or it may be a chart, table, graph, map, or figure. In every case, to answer the questions in the Science Test, you must understand the information provided or use the information to solve a problem or make a judgment.

Directions and Sample Questions for Science

Choose the one best answer to each item.

Item 1 is based on the following figure.



1. A large fiberglass tank was placed in a pit as shown in the diagram above. Before pipes could be attached and the tank filled with gasoline, the workers were asked to move the tank to another location.

   Which of the following suggestions would be the best way to raise the tank off the bottom of the pit so cables could be placed under the tank?

   (1) Fill the tank with gasoline.
   (2) Fill the tank with water.
   (3) Fill the pit with water.
   (4) Fill the pit with water and the tank with gasoline.
   (5) Fill both the pit and the tank with water.

Correct Answer: 3
Difficulty Level: Easy

Typical of most questions in the Science Test, this physics question presents a practical problem that must be solved. To answer the question correctly, you must be able to understand the key features of the figure and understand the physical reaction that will result from each of the proposed solutions.

Option (3) is the best answer because the method it proposes is most likely to cause the tank to float off the bottom of the pit. By filling the *pit* with water and leaving the tank filled only with air, the tank becomes buoyant and is likely to rise off the bottom of the pit so that cables can be placed under the tank.

2. An electric current releases heat to the wire in which it is traveling.

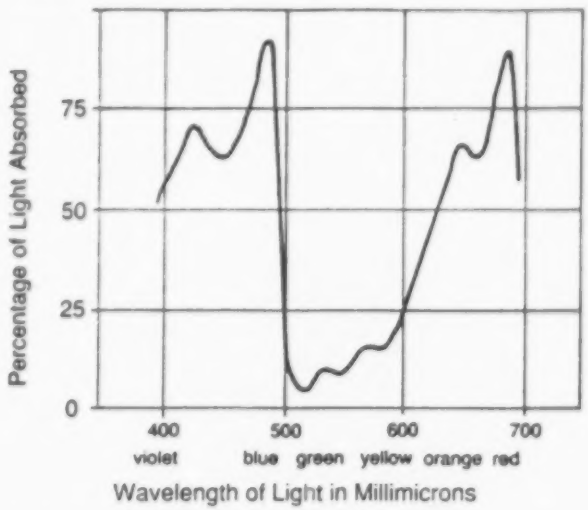
   Which of the following electric appliances would best illustrate an application of the above statement?

   (1) mixer
   (2) clock
   (3) vacuum
   (4) toaster
   (5) fan

Correct Answer: 4
Difficulty Level: Easy

Many of the questions in the Science Test, like this one, provide a scientific principle, followed by a question or problem regarding its application. Only one of the appliances named in the options—the toaster—*uses* heat produced by the electric current in the wire. In this sense, the toaster best illustrates an *application* of the principle. All of the appliances named in the other options contain wires which undoubtedly release heat, but the heat is a by-product and not central to the intended purpose of the appliance.

Item 3 refers to the following graph.



3. According to the graph above, which of the following colors of light is absorbed the least by a plant?

   (1) red
   (2) yellow
   (3) green
   (4) blue
   (5) violet

Correct Answer: 3
Difficulty Level: Difficult

To answer this biology question correctly, you must first read and correctly interpret the graph that is provided. First, note that the question calls for you to identify the color absorbed the *least*. Next, notice the labels that identify the vertical and horizontal axes of the graph. You must recognize that the label on the vertical axis, "Percentage of Light Absorbed," is a measure of the *quantity* of light absorbed. Following the line graph to its *lowest* point, you can see that that point is closest to the label "green" on the horizontal axis.

Austin Independent School District

Office of Research and Evaluation

Systemwide Evaluation
David Wilkinson, Senior Evaluator

Author:
David Wilkinson, Senior Evaluator

Contributing Staff:
Melissa Sabatino, Evaluation Associate
Julia Griffith, Evaluation Associate
Paula Marable, Evaluation Associate
Dr. Mario Sanchez, Research Analyst
Veda Raju, Programmer/Analyst
Leonila M. Gonzalez, Secretary

Covers:
Steven C. Truesdale, Evaluation Associate

Board of Trustees

Kathy Rider, President
Jerry Carlson, Vice President
Melissa Knippa, Secretary

Tom Agnor
Diana Castañeda
Loretta Edelen
Liz Hartman
Geoff Rips
Ted Whatley

Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Terry N. Bishop

Publication No. 93.12
September 1994